

# **I. PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR ACTION**

## **I.A PURPOSE**

The purpose of the proposed action is to provide an access-controlled four-lane highway that will allow for the continuation of US 67, US 136, and proposed Illinois 336 around the City of Macomb. The highway will also link east-west roads, existing US 136, and proposed Illinois 336 to US 67. US 67 currently extends in a north-south direction throughout the western portion of the state, from Alton to the Quad Cities. The proposed highway will reduce congestion in and around Macomb, increase safety for city traffic by establishing a through-traffic alternative (bypass), reduce travel times for local and regional drivers, and support the city's economic development goals.

This Draft Environmental Impact Statement has been prepared to fulfill the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act and to provide information for federal actions by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the US Army Corps of Engineers. These actions are, respectively, issuance of a Record of Decision for the Macomb Area Study, and issuance of a Clean Water Act Section 404 Permit.

## **I.B HISTORY**

This Draft Environmental Impact Statement is the culmination of a long planning process. Since the early 1960s, civic leaders, local agencies, and citizen groups have expressed the need for an improved highway system in west central Illinois. There are no interstate highways within the western Illinois counties of Henderson, Hancock, McDonough, Fulton, Mason, Menard, Cass, Schuyler, and Brown. Macomb, the population center for McDonough County, is approximately equidistant from the cities of Peoria, Springfield, Quincy, and Rock Island-Moline. As is the case in much of west central Illinois, transportation links are by federal and state highways (US 67 and US 136, IL 61 and IL 94) that are rural two-lane roads over most of their length. Planning efforts since the early 1960s have been directed at improving the links from western Illinois communities to larger cities in Illinois, Iowa, and Missouri, and to the regional expressway and interstate highway system. The Macomb Area Study is a most recent component of that planning process. Alternative corridors evaluated during the Macomb Area Study are shown on Exhibit I-1. Exhibit I-2 shows the west central Illinois highway network and proposed improvements.

In 1987, US 67 was improved to a four-lane expressway with partial-access control from Springlake Road, north of Macomb, to IL 9, south of Good Hope. Construction of a four-lane expressway from Good Hope to Monmouth was completed in 1997, with the exception of the bypass around Roseville, which was completed in 2002.

In 1999, a US 67 bypass was completed on new location west of Jacksonville (between I-72 to the southwest of Jacksonville and US 67 to the northwest). This new section of US 67 is currently (2003) being extended south from I-72 to existing US 67 near Manchester (completion is scheduled for 2004). Improvements to US 67 from Manchester south to Alton will be constructed in sections as funding becomes available. Design approval for a four-lane US 67 expressway from Jacksonville north to Macomb was granted in early 2003.

The FAP 302 project to construct IL 336 from Quincy to Carthage is being implemented in stages. The section from Quincy to approximately one mile north of IL 94 is completed. The section from one mile north of IL 94 to approximately three miles (4.8 kilometers) south of

Carthage is under construction with completion scheduled for late 2003. A four-lane expressway that will continue IL 336 (FAP 315) from south of Carthage to the west edge of Macomb is currently (2003) under design. The Record of Decision for this section was signed in December 1999.

Upon completion of the projects discussed above, IL 336 and US 67 will be upgraded to four-lane rural expressways from Quincy to just west of Macomb, from Monmouth to the northern outskirts of Macomb, and from Alton to the southern outskirts of Macomb. Improvements around Macomb would be the last four-lane highway section needed to link western Illinois to other cities in Illinois, Iowa, and Missouri, and to the interstate highway system. Key connections would be available to I-74 in Galesburg, to Keokuk, Iowa, by way of IL 336/US 136, to the St. Louis, Missouri area via US 67, and to the Quad Cities on US 67. The Macomb Area Study was undertaken to evaluate highway alternatives around and into the City of Macomb that would serve present and future travel needs, and complete the highway network.

## **I.C NEED**

### **I.C.1 Statewide System Linkage**

Construction of the proposed project would provide the final link to the other four-lane expressway improvements that are either existing, under construction, or proposed in west central Illinois. These roads are:

- US 34 from Monmouth to I-74 in Galesburg – existing;
- US 34 from Monmouth to Gulfport – sections of this corridor are in various stages of planning and design in the IDOT five-year funding program;
- US 67 from Macomb to Monmouth – existing;
- US 67 from Alton to south of Macomb – US 67 bypass completed on new location to the west of Jacksonville between existing US 67 and I-72, completion scheduled for 2004 of extension of this bypass from I-72 south to existing US 67 near Manchester, improvements to US 67 from Manchester south to Alton to be constructed in sections as funding becomes available, and design approval for four-lane US 67 expressway from Jacksonville north to Macomb granted in early 2003;
- IL 336 (FAP 302) from Quincy to Carthage – section from Quincy to north of IL 94 is completed; section from north of IL 94 to south of Carthage is under construction (completion scheduled for late 2003);
- IL 336 (FAP 315) from Carthage to Macomb – four-lane expressway from south of Carthage to the west edge of Macomb is currently under design (Record of Decision was signed in December 1999); and
- IL 336 from Peoria to Macomb – planning phase for this corridor is scheduled in the IDOT five-year funding program.

These improvements will complete the connection of west central Illinois to the interstate system at Galesburg, as well as providing connections to major population centers in west central Illinois and Iowa.

Highway improvements in the Macomb Area Study corridor are a component of this four-lane expressway system. US 67 is being reconstructed as a four-lane expressway with a design speed of 110 kilometers (70 miles) per hour, as is IL 336 between Quincy and Macomb. These expressways will permit higher travel speeds and will provide greater capacity than the two-lane routes they are replacing. The corridor around the Macomb area is a critical component of this developing highway network. Without an expressway link from IL 336 west of Macomb to US 67 east and north of Macomb, the regional benefits of the expressways would be lost. Travel time and capacity would be limited by the restricted operating conditions on the two-lane facilities that presently exist.

## **I.C.2 Local Transportation Network**

Exhibit I-2 shows west central Illinois' highway network. In the Macomb area, the key highways are US 136 and US 67. US 136 and US 67 intersect in downtown Macomb. In 1993, an Origin-Destination Survey and Report was prepared for the Macomb Area Study. According to the report, US 67 and US 136 carried between 10,000 and 12,000 vehicles per day in 1995, with 11 percent being truck traffic. There are ten signalized intersections on US 136 and US 67 within Macomb (see Exhibit I-3). The average speed through Macomb is 50 kilometers (30 miles) per hour.

The at-grade railroad crossing at the intersection of US 136/US 67 is a source of traffic delays. Ten trains per day cross the highway between 5:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. Gate closures last from two to four minutes per train.

Completed improvements of US 67 between Macomb and Monmouth, proposed improvements to US 67 between Jacksonville and Macomb (the Jacksonville Bypass is completed and the remainder recently received design approval), and proposed improvements to US 136 between Macomb and Carthage (for which a Record of Decision was signed in December 1999 and a four-lane expressway is currently under design) have the potential to generate additional traffic demand within the study area. The projected average daily traffic (ADT) for the year 2025 on US 67 through Macomb from the north city limits to the current juncture of US 67 and US 136 ranges from 18,500 vehicles per day (vpd) to 24,000 vpd. The projected 2025 ADT on US 136 through Macomb ranges from 19,900 vpd to 21,100 vpd from the west city limits to the juncture, and is 20,600 vpd east of the juncture, where US 67 and US 136 share a common alignment. Exhibit I-4 shows the existing and projected no-build traffic volumes.

With a freeway connection outside of Macomb, traffic on US 136 and US 67 through downtown Macomb would be as much as 30 percent less in 2025. The reduction in truck traffic could be as high as 36 percent. Forecast future congestion through downtown would be reduced. Given the growth of the community and local traffic, traffic volumes on US 136 and US 67 in downtown Macomb would be greater, however, than they are today even with a new freeway connection.

An additional benefit would be travel-time savings. The origin-destination study indicated that eliminating travel through Macomb could result in a travel-time saving of up to 4.9 minutes over traveling through the town. This is approximately 42,000 hours per year of travel savings.

Accident characteristics were analyzed along US 136 between Deere Road (west of Macomb) to US 67 (east of Macomb) and along US 67 between US 136 (downtown Macomb) to Springlake Road. In the years 1999 to 2001, 562 accidents were reported. Turning, angle, and rear end collisions accounted for 71 percent of these accidents. The majority of the accidents occurred on clear days with dry surface conditions. Approximately seven percent of the collisions involved a semi-tractor or trailer. Nine high-accident locations are within the study area. The numerous intersections along US 136 and US 67 in Macomb contribute to the high

number of high-accident locations. The types of accidents occurring most frequently are intersection-related crashes. A bypass around Macomb would remove through-traffic from in-town roads, thereby reducing the likelihood of intersection-related crashes. In particular, truck traffic passing beyond Macomb would be routed around the in-town routes, decreasing the chances of truck-related accidents.

### **I.C.3 Economic Development**

Macomb is the economic and population center of McDonough County. Approximately 56 percent of the county's 2000 population of 32,913 lived in Macomb. Macomb is the central marketplace for McDonough County. Macomb businesses accounted for 85 percent of the county's retail sales in 2001, including but not limited to sales of farming equipment, seeds, and supplies to residents of surrounding counties. Nine out of 10 of the major employers in McDonough County are in Macomb, which draws commuting labor from McDonough, Warren, and Hancock counties.

Economic development is of concern in Macomb and McDonough County. McDonough County is behind most of Illinois in development. With a 2000 population that exceeded state averages for education, McDonough County's 1999 per capita income of \$23,104 was \$7,214 (31 percent) below the average for Illinois. Approximately 20 percent of the county's population had incomes below the poverty level in 2000, a figure comparable to 1990. This can be compared with a statewide 2000 average of 10.7 percent a 10 percent decrease below 1990. The growth rate for income in the county, between 1989 and 1999, was slightly faster than that of the state (57 percent as compared to 52 percent).

McDonough County developed an *Overall Economic Development Program* in 1980 and 1981. The report was revised in 1984 (McDonough County Economic Development Commission, 1984). Macomb produced the *Macomb, Illinois Comprehensive Plan* in 1989. Both plans pointed to transportation as an important factor in economic development and set transportation-related goals and objectives.

The McDonough County plan points to the lack of connection with an interstate highway as a "problem and constraint" standing in the way of economic development. The plan established as a goal to:

"Promote a county and regional non-metropolitan multi-modal transportation program to satisfy the transportation needs of McDonough County's industry, business and citizens."

The goal is supported by objectives, the first of which is to promote and assist in the development of an improved highway system in McDonough County and all of western Illinois. The plan called for a long-term strategy to "work closely with the local, county, and state highway departments to improve the road system in the county and all of western Illinois."

Goals established in the *Macomb Comprehensive Plan* include:

- Provide opportunities that will foster economic growth and prosperity in Macomb, furthering the economic well-being of the city's residents.
- Provide an adequate and safe automobile, pedestrian, bicycle, truck, rail, and air transportation system that is designed to support the overall physical, social and economic goals and objectives of the community.

An objective for the economic growth goal is to improve the transportation systems available to Macomb.

Macomb's comprehensive plan points to an economy that, despite heavy concentration of employment in professional and service jobs – Western Illinois University and the McDonough District Hospital are two of the largest employers – also has a viable manufacturing sector. Macomb is promoting manufacturing through an enterprise zone. Exhibit I-5 shows the enterprise zone's location. Businesses locating in the zone receive a variety of tax benefits. The enterprise zone has successfully drawn businesses. Additional information regarding economic development may be found in Section II.A.2, under "Economic Development Planning."

Macomb has limited rail freight service. Trucks ship goods to industrial, warehousing, and retail businesses. Deliveries and development of new businesses would be greatly aided by improved travel times and by access to the surrounding highway network connecting to Chicago, Peoria, St. Louis, and other destinations in Iowa, Missouri and Illinois.